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ABSTRACT

This qualitative inquiry examines preservice teachers' cases describing their reflective thinking, hopes, concerns, problems, and achievements as they address the complexities of devising and offering literacy-based arts lessons to students in two urban elementary schools. The researchers examined and categorized 203 teaching cases written by 8 groups of preservice teachers. Analysis revealed 11 major themes. Ten themes related to problematic issues, such as classroom teachers' apathy and disinterest during art lessons. A single theme highlighted the achievements and successes of preservice teachers as they recognizes the increased motivation and enthusiasm of disruptive or academically at-risk students when students became fully engaged in arts activities. Implications of the inquiry underscore the importance of providing preservice teachers with hands-on encounters with the arts and the potential dangers of reducing or eliminating the arts in elementary education. (Contains 1 table and 39 references.) (Author/SLD)

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"First We Read A Great Book": Interfacing Literacy Instruction with the Arts in Two Urban Elementary Schools: Preservice Teachers' Case Quandaries and Accomplishments

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Abstract

This qualitative inquiry examines preservice teachers' cases describing their reflective thinking, hopes, concerns, problems, and achievements as they address the complexities of devising and offering literacy-based arts lessons to students in two urban, elementary schools. The researchers examined and categorized 203 teaching cases written by eight groups of preservice teachers. Analysis revealed 11 major themes. Ten themes related to problematic issues, such as classroom teachers' apathy and disinterest in the arts and preservice teachers' lack of modeling and scaffolding during arts lessons. A single theme highlighted the achievements and successes of the preservice teachers as they recognized the increased motivation and enthusiasm of disruptive or academically at-risk students when students became fully engaged in arts activities. Implications of the inquiry underscores the importance of providing preservice teachers with hands-on encounters with the arts and the potential dangers of reducing or eliminating the arts in elementary education.

"First We Read A Great Book":
Interfacing Literacy Instruction with the Arts in Two Urban Elementary Schools:
Preservice Teachers' Case Quandaries and Accomplishments

"The trouble began when Richard refused to practice his part. He wanted to make up his own lines instead of following the script I wrote" (excerpt from a preservice teacher's case narrative)

"Well, she sang like a bird! Her creative book was perfect ... and she remembered the entire story of The Little Red Hen. Who would have thought that her behavior would improve so dramatically when I introduced the arts?" (excerpt from a preservice teacher's case narrative)

"These third graders never have been allowed to manipulate the medium of paint so they mixed all the paint together until they formed a greyish-green color instead of the red and yellow we needed for our pyramid" (excerpt from a preservice teacher's case narrative)

"I ain't gonna be no little pig in a stupid play," Alan shouted. "That's fine," I said. "You can just stay up here in the classroom with your teacher" (excerpt from a preservice teacher's case narrative)

While there have been nominal attempts to acknowledge the arts in official statements of United States educational goals, the arts are neglected in Goals 2000: The Educate America Act (1994) (Greene, 1995). One possible explanation for this oversight is the reality that artistic pursuits remain peripheral in preservice teacher education because "they exist outside the framework of what the elementary teacher is required to teach and is truly held accountable for" (Fowler, 1988, p. 55). Not surprisingly, a survey reveals that United States' teachers overwhelmingly believe that arts activities are time-consuming 'frills', with little practical use (Bolton, 1985). A few scholars even suggest that teachers who wish to offer literacy-based arts activities might first consider participating "in these exercises under the direction of a trained professional" (Popp, 1996, p. 235). Unfortunately, "only one in four students [in United States schools] gets the chance to sing, play an instrument or perform plays in class each week" (Mississippi Sun Herald, November 11, 1998, Section B, p. 1), and Richard Riley,

United States Secretary of Education, notes a continuing retreat of the arts in schools (Mississippi Sun Herald, November 12, 1998, Section B, p. 4).

How We View the Arts

As longtime supervisors of two university/urban elementary school literacy collaborations, we view the arts "not as extras to be addressed if there is time left over in the day" (Blecher & Jaffee, 1998, p. xii) but, as valid and natural ways for students to demonstrate how they learn, and what they know and understand (Blecher & Jaffee, 1998). Our experiences show us that integrating literacy lessons with the arts helps meet the individual learning needs of all students and empowers those who come from diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. Weaving literacy instruction with arts activities promotes students' interests in reading and writing (McMaster, 1998) and provides opportunities for those with varied learning styles and special learning requirements to portray their emotions, explore and enhance their understandings, and extend and express their thoughts effectively.

Especially relevant to our work as professors of literacy, we note that aesthetic engagements create possibilities for students from nonmainstream backgrounds to construct, extend, and share meaning from the texts they read and to generate new meaning and novel texts (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 1998) (cf. Purves, 1993, Prest & Prest, 1988, and Rosenblatt, 1995, for discussions of transactional literary theory and readers' aesthetic responses to literature). In addition, participating in the arts gives students who speak variations of standard

English opportunities to increase their oral and written language. They play with words, invent language, and create music from phrases (Steinbergh, 1995). Equally important, the arts provide cultural opportunities that are not related to social class, academic ranking, or standard English proficiency (Pankratz & Mulcahy, 1989).

Further Solidifying Our Convictions

Over the past few years, we have further solidified our convictions about the importance of supporting students' literacy learning with the arts. Insights from educational scholars have convinced us that as we enter the twenty-first century, language arts instruction must broaden "to reflect the greater oral, written, and and communication needs [of students]" (Tompkins, 1998, p.23). These increased communication requirements include the ability to comprehend and integrate visual material, such as films, photographs, commercials, and videos (i.e., viewing), with written forms of text, and the ability to create meaning through drama productions, murals, diagrams, and illustrations (i.e., visually representing) (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Cairney, 1997; Flood, Lapp, & Wood, 1998; Tompkins, 1998). The concept of multiliteracy (Eisner 1992; 1997) and the current focus on multiple intelligences (Gardner 1991; 1993) also have redefined and extended our definition of literacy beyond print and oral language to encompass drama, poetry, music, dance, and the visual arts as legitimate venues and expressions of understanding and communication (Blecher & Jaffee, 1998; Eisner, 1997). Thus, the arts occupy a central place in forming

and extending all aspects of our curriculum (see Gallas, 1995).

Preservice Teachers Integrating Literacy Instruction with the Arts

Because of our firm beliefs about the benefits of arts encounters for urban, elementary students, as part of course requirements, preservice teachers in our reading/language arts field programs integrate literacy instruction with the arts at every opportunity. Following ideas from Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" (see Moll, 1993 and Vygotsky, 1978), the preservice teachers collaborate with their students in presenting student-authored puppet shows, Readers Theatre, and drama productions. They work side-by-side with their students, scaffolding, modeling, and creating text-based murals, story quilts, and songs, and as co-constructors of knowledge, along with their students, they author and publish fiction and informational texts.

Preservice Teachers' Cases

Our preservice teachers also write teaching cases describing their reflective thinking, hopes, concerns, problems, and achievements as they address the complexities of devising and offering literacy-based arts lessons (see J. Shulman, 1992; L. Shulman, 1992; Merseth, 1991; Richards & Gipe, in press, for the benefits of case writing for education majors). Each two-to-three page narrative is written in the first person, contains dialogue, and presents relevant, context-specific details. We also urge our preservice teachers to provide closure to their cases by including some possible solutions to their instructional dilemmas and

some explanations for their accomplishments (see Richards & Gipe in press for ideas to help guide preservice teachers' case writing efforts).

Recently, we have become particularly drawn to the content of our preservice teachers' cases as rich sources of information. Specifically, we noted that the narratives provide a window into our preservice teachers' planning, thinking, and lived experiences as they undergird and nurture their students' literacy learning through the arts. We also recognized that when viewed as a collection of authentic teaching stories, the cases offer teachers and teacher educators considerable insights about the realities of linking students' literacy instruction with aesthetic encounters. Most importantly, we discerned that the narratives are grounded in veracity and credibility ... that is, they portray real preservice teachers who offer genuine literacy-based arts lessons in bona fide, urban elementary schools. Since there is a paucity of research concerning the integration of literacy education with the arts and arts education in general (see Eisner, 1998; Louisiana Institute for Arts in Education, 1998; Pankratz & Mulcahy, 1989; Taylor, 1996), thinking that we might make a contribution to the literature, we decided to conduct a systematic, research project documenting the themes in our preservice teachers' narratives. We also hoped to expand our understandings about our two nontraditional field programs in which the curricula extend beyond conventional approaches to teaching reading and writing. Ultimately, we hoped to improve our own pedagogy by uncovering the concerns, dilemmas, needs, and triumphs of preservice teachers who work to develop urban students' literacy through artistic pursuits.

Conceptual Framework for Our Inquiry

Three literatures informed our inquiry: 1) tenets of social constructivism which suggest that language reveals individuals' knowledge, perceptions, and beliefs (Goetz & LeCompre, 1984); 2) ideas from discourse analysis that describe written texts as true reflections of human experiences (Gee, Michaels, & O'Connor, 1992 and; 3) premises from social interactionism which suggest that as mature human beings encounter problems that emerge through their circumstances, they move to resolve those problems through thoughtful reflection and action (Woods, 1992). In addition, we were mindful of traditions from hermeneutics which "indicate that the same text can be read [and interpreted] in a number of different ways (Tappan & Brown, 1992, p. 186).

Research Methodology

Questions Guiding Our Research As They Related to the Integration of The Arts with Literacy Instruction

In our inquiry we sought to answer the following questions:

1) What universal themes are visible in our preservice teachers' cases?
2) Are possible theme variations in our preservice teachers' cases related to the contextual conditions of the two different urban schools in which they work?
3) What are the most common problematic issues identified by our preservice teachers?
4) What teaching/learning successes and accomplishments are portrayed in the cases?
5) Do our preservice teachers' quandaries or accomplishments reside in distinct domains of the arts, such as drama, music, creative writing, or the visual arts?

6) Do the contents of our preservice teachers' narratives illuminate instructional shortcomings or program issues that we, as supervisors, need to remedy?
7) Are the implications of the research germane to teacher education and elementary school curricula?

Analyzing the Cases

Working as a research team, we examined and categorized 203 teaching cases written by eight groups of preservice teachers who matriculated through our programs each fall and spring semester over the past two years. First, we collated the cases according to the two different teaching contexts in which our preservice teachers worked (97 cases were written by four groups of preservice teachers in Davis School and 106 cases were written by four groups of preservice teachers in Logan School).

In subsequent meetings, using analytic induction (Bogdan & Biklin, 1987), we read and reread the narratives, looking for emerging categories and patterns that would "facilitate a coherent synthesis of the data" (Gay, 1996, p. 227). We made notes and underlined what we considered to be salient dimensions of the texts as a way of revealing the predominant theme or central issue contained in each case. Next, we coded and categorized each narrative according to the prevailing theme (e.g.,"Classroom teacher's apathy and disinterest in the arts "). Finally, we tabulated the number of cases in each thematic category for each school context. We settled any differences of interpretations through collegial discussions until we reached an agreement.

Themes in Our Preservice Teachers' Cases

Analysis of the cases revealed that across the two teaching contexts, our preservice teachers wrote about 11 major issues: 1) problems caused by preservice teachers who were overly 'teacher-directed' in the arts; 2) tensions related to classroom teachers' apathy and disinterest in the arts; 3) concerns about students who created books and fictional pieces reflecting personal experiences with violence and stressful environments; 4) dilemmas caused by preservice teachers neglecting to model and scaffold arts lessons for students; 5) quandaries about students who were afraid to take risks in arts activities; 6) successes concerning the increased motivation of disruptive or academically at-risk students when they became fully engaged in arts experiences; 7) dilemmas about students' lack of familiarity with visual arts media; 8) frustrations about older students' arts initiatives being significantly influenced by popular, animated, high tech films and provocative rock and 'hip-hop' videos; 9) dilemmas caused by students' lack of cooperation; 10) quandaries associated with preservice teachers' inadequate planning and insufficient group management skills and; 11) problems caused by preservice teachers offering arts activities that were not linked to literacy lessons (see Table for the number of cases in each thematic category for each school context). The following case excerpts illustrate these common themes.

Problems Caused by Preservice Teachers Who Were Overly 'Teacher-Directed' in the Arts

Drama Needs Democracy

When I first told my students that we would be performing a play they

immediately became disruptive and started yelling out what play they wanted to perform and what parts they wanted to take. Well, I got really upset over their behavior so I said, "The next time we meet I will have our drama production typed and I will assign parts to everyone."

At our next session, I announced, "We are going to do a play about Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Jonah, you are the Poppa Bear, Margie, you are the Momma Bear, and George, you are the Baby Bear. Salina is Goldilocks and Mercedes is the narrator."

I thought that my prior planning and concrete directions would solve everything, but was I wrong. Jonah said, "I want to be the narrator," and Salina said, "I want to be a bear."

So, mass confusion reigned once more. Then, when we got the parts straightened out, the group continued to be divided about their lines and they argued about where they should stand on the stage. Their disruptive behavior continued throughout all of our play practices. What a mess! I finally went to the library and read Start with a story (Watson-Ellam, 1991). I learned that creating drama productions should bring about a sense of community among participants rather than chaos. I also found out that I shouldn't tell my students what play we will present or assign parts to them. Rather, I need to discuss drama possibilities with my students, serve as a resource as they create their drama productions, and then, give them choices about what characters they will play.

Tensions Related to Classroom Teachers' Apathy and Disinterest in the Arts

Teachers Not Getting Involved

While my group was working on our mural, the classroom teacher and her assistant were gossiping, drinking coffee, and eating girl scout cookies. How inappropriate is that? After our mural was finished I asked the teacher to look at our work. I was really shocked when she pointed to Mariel's starfish and Noah's lobster and said, "Now what's that supposed to be?"

Then, she went back to drinking coffee. I will not let this teacher's lack of enthusiasm for our art work affect my thinking about teachers, teaching, and literacy-based arts lessons. I spoke to a teacher who has been teaching for more than twenty years and she said to just remember the good things about this project and never act like that classroom teacher.

Concerns about Students Who Created Books and Fictional Pieces Reflecting Personal Experiences with Violence and Stressful Environments

What You See Is What You Talk about
And What You Dream at Night

First we read a great book ... Who lost a shoe (Hazen, 1992). Then we talked about the important parts of stories. The kindergartners really grasped the concept of characters, settings, problems, and solutions so I decided they were ready to dictate their stories to me. Roger was first. He said, "Somebody stold my shoes and I asked my momma for new ones and she said, 'No,' so I went to steal some shoes."

Next was Tyrone. He said, "My sister peed in my momma's bed and my momma whooped her until she cried and fell asleep and didn't wake up for a long time."

Devonte told his story by saying, "They crashed in the windows of my grandmaw's truck and scart me in the middle of the night. My brother was running out and yelling. Then, they stold the truck."

I sat very still for a minute. I did not want to continue with these stories. I was distraught. I didn't know what to do so I said, "We'll finish these stories the next time we meet."

None of my fellow preservice teachers knew what to do about these poor children so I went to the library and skimmed two books ... Violence and the family (Green, 1980), and Violence - Our fastest growing public health problem (Langone, 1984). Both of these books share the opinion that what you see and experience in your environment is what you talk about during the day and what you dream about at night. When the children told me stories about violence, they were really telling me about their everyday realities. How can I help these poor children?

Dilemmas Caused by Preservice Teachers Neglecting to Model and Scaffold Arts Lessons

I Knew Better/Why Didn't I Model?

When it was time for my fourth grade students to write their books, it never dawned on me that they did not understand the basic elements of a story. I explained, "We will be writing and publishing our own books." Then, I asked,

"Who will the authors of our books be?"

Instead of a happy response all I got was eight kids with blank stares. I had planned for our lesson to be a prewriting session and I suddenly realized that my plans were going to have to go out the window because none of my fourth graders knew anything about making books. What was I thinking? All I have heard from my professor is to "Model, model, model." And ... I didn't model anything. Naturally, this lesson was awful. Well, I learned a lesson myself ... never take anything for granted about students' background knowledge and never forget to MODEL!

Quandaries about Students Who Are Afraid To Take Risks in Arts Activities

Fear of Failure

My fourth graders recently constructed a mural based upon the story Charlotte's Web (White, 1952). All of the students did a lovely job except Michael. He is an excellent student who has to be perfect in everything. In fact, he can't do any visual arts activities unless he has a ruler in his hand. He is so uptight about making a mistake that he detests art. For example, when we were doing the border for our mural, Michael stood back and let others in the group paint. I asked him, "Michael, don't you want to join in?

Michael shook his head and replied, "Nope, I might mess up. I might make the border crooked."

Michael also is insecure about writing creatively. Last week I reviewed the basic features of stories and showed examples of other students' creative books.

Then, I explained to my group that we would write and publish our own books. Michael immediately began to complain. "I don't know what to write about. I can't draw," he said.

No matter how I encouraged him, he refused to paint, write, or draw. I asked my professor about Michael and she said that some students have few opportunities to work with visual arts media. Therefore, they don't know how to paint or draw. She also said that students may not enjoy writing because they have a fear of failure or they lack personal awareness of what steps to take to write. I know Michael is afraid to fail in the arts but I don't know what to do about it.

Successes Concerning the Increased Motivation of Disruptive or Academically At-Risk Students When They Became Fully Engaged in Arts Experiences

Success At Last

Poor Carlos had problems with every literacy activity I introduced this semester. He is a third grader who can hardly read and write. As the semester progressed, I could see Carlos' spirit decreasing and I felt like I was letting him down. I teamed him up with a learning buddy, but it seemed like it was too late. Carlos gave up trying and he started to be a behavior problem. At the end of March we began working on our drama production. Well, who would have thought that the arts could have such a positive effect on a student?

First, we picked names to assign characters. When it was Carlos' turn he excitedly said, "I want to be the big, bad wolf!"

As the weeks went by, we practiced over and over. One day, Carlos stopped me in the hall. He said, " Miss Clarke, I've been thinking about my part as the

wolf. Can I change some of my lines in the play so they will be easier for me to remember?

"Sure," I replied.

The following Tuesday, I went into the auditorium to get my group ready to perform and there was Carlos in his wolf costume with the biggest grin I ever saw. I was not used to seeing him smile and it was a shock! Carlos had 'confidence' written all over his face. Well, we got up on the stage and he made me so proud! It was as if I was watching my own child perform. After our final bows, I gave him a big hug and then it hit me. Performing in a drama activity had provided Carlos with the first school success he's had since I've known him. I bet Carlos could learn to read and write by authoring, producing, and starring in plays.

Dilemmas about Students' Lack of Familiarity with Visual Arts Media

The Great Pyramid Mess!!

My fifth grade students were all painting three-dimensional pyramids described in the book Emily Eyefinger and the lost treasure (Ball, 1994). They loved painting and were really involved in their work. However, I didn't pay enough attention to what they were doing. When I glanced over at their work, they had mixed all the paint together until they formed a greyish-green color instead of the red and yellow we needed for our pyramids. Well, they certainly had a good time exploring how to mix and use paint, but I had to throw out all the paint and begin the lesson all over again.

I found some solutions to this pyramid/paint mess by reading The effective

teaching of language arts (Norton, 1997). In this text, Ernst (1994) describes an artists' workshop where students look at the work of other artists before they begin painting and drawing. This pre-drawing and painting activity helps students become familiar with various types of media. Ernst also suggests that teachers provide mini-lessons that focus on techniques of painting and drawing before students engage in these activities. When students have opportunities to manipulate arts media, they learn how the media works. If I had presented some pre-art lessons, we wouldn't of had such a mess.

Frustration about Older Students' Arts Initiatives being Significantly Influenced by High Tech Films and Provocative Rock and "Hip-Hop" Videos

'Hip-Hop' and All That Rock

It isn't easy offering literacy-based arts activities to older students who have had few opportunities to engage in artistic pursuits. I teach sixth grade boys and most have never made books, pasted, sung in a school chorus, painted, created papier mache sculpture, or participated in drama productions. They love our literacy-based arts experiences, but, they have no idea how to use their own self-expression and creativity. Instead, they fall back on what they see on TV and hear on their boom boxes.

"Dr. Love and Puff Daddy are **COOOL**," David shouted when we were talking about putting on a play.

"Yeah," Anthony responded, "Let's do a play about Dr Love and Puff Daddy and their wicked ways."

"I don't know who they are," I answered. The idea of putting on a play about

rap stars named Dr. Love and Puff Daddy were not on my teaching agenda.

The same thing happened when we painted. The students created terrible looking creatures that they had seen on TV. They also tried to paint really prococative looking women that looked like the Spice Girls and they got frustrated when they couldn't create animated cars, trains, and animals like they see in high tech films. Well, I finally had to make some rules. "No more TV and rap stuff in our work," I announced. "We need to use our own imaginations and ideas."

I wonder if I am fooling myself? These students are significantly influenced by television, high tech films, and 'hip hop' and rock music as Alvermann, Moon, and Haygood state in their text Popular culture in the classroom: Teaching and researching critical media literacy (1999). How can I counteract what they see and hear daily and consider 'cool'? How can I bring out their own creativity? I can't find any solutions to this problem at all.

Dilemmas Caused by Students' Lack of Cooperation and Inappropriate Behavior

Why Were They So Mean to Jim?

We were working on our mural and every one of my third graders was painting the background portion as a team. The next task was to decide which students would paint each of the story characters. This part went well too. I remember thinking, "Wow, things are going so smoothly."

All of a sudden, things turned ugly! Jim, was working diligently on his illustration and Cedric turned to him. "EEWW!!" he said, "What are you making?"

Poor Jim felt terrible ... I could tell by the expression on his face.

To make matters worse, some of the other students joined in. "Eeew Cedric ... You right. We ain't gonna put Jim's stuff on our mural cause it will mess up the whole thing."

Of course, I stuck up for Jim. I said, "Jim, your art work is fine." I also told the other students, "You are being mean and uncooperative."

This event remained in my brain all week. I kept questioning myself about why the students had ganged up on Jim. Should I have handled this situation differently? Was there more I should have done? After reading a book about the personality dimensions of eight-to-ten-year-olds, I learned that they are very aware of others' mistakes and they are not very sensitive to others' feelings. I also learned that students this age display a robust capacity to heal quickly. Sure enough, at our next meeting, the students were all getting along. But, I wonder how I could have handled the students' uncooperative and inappropriate behavior better?

Quandaries Associated with Preservice Teachers' Inadequate Planning and Insufficient Group Management Skills

What Did We Do Wrong?

For our drama presentation we combined all three of our kindergarten groups together. The song we chose to include in our play had repetitive lyrics and we thought it would be easy for our kindergarten students to learn. We practiced that song day after day for thirty minutes at each session. But, each time we practiced, our management problems got worse. "I want to be in the front of the bus,"

Patrice would always yell.

Tyrone always complained, "He pushed me."

Other children ran up and down the stage and some even jumped off the edge of the stage to the floor below.

It went on and on like that until finally we decided that whoever spoke or acted out of turn would be put out of the group. We actually ended up with only 12 children by the last practice. Of course when it was the day of our presentation we relented and let all of the children participate. I know we didn't do a good job as preservice teachers and co-producers of a play. A dancing teacher told me that rehearsals should never be longer than fifteen minutes or children lose interest. Maybe that's one reason that we couldn't keep order. But, lurking in my mind is another reason for our dilemma. I think we didn't take charge of our large group.

Problems Caused by Preservice Teachers Offering Arts Activities That Were Unrelated to Literacy Lessons

Is It Time For Art Yet?

After about thirty minutes into every lesson my third graders always asked, "Miss Jennifer, is it time for art yet? Are we going to have art?"

I always said "Yes, look at our 'News of the Day'. Art is listed on our chart."

Then, worried that my students were losing interest in our reading lesson, I always asked them, "Don't you want to finish reading our story and doing our writing activity?"

Usually, the students would agree to finish the reading lesson, but I always sensed that they saw reading and writing only as a way to get to our art activities ... in other words, reading and writing were just a means to an end for them ... art was really what they wanted to do. In fact, when they were involved in the arts, they always calmed down and concentrated the most.

During one lesson, after reading a collection of Shel Silverstein's poetry, I asked my students to illustrate their favorite poem. As I walked around, interacting with my group, I noticed that Samantha was drawing a really fine picture of a little girl. "What a beautiful picture," I said, "Who is the little girl?"

Samantha proudly replied, "It's my sister."

"Your sister? What poem is that from?" I asked.

With a confused look on her face, Samantha said, "It's not from a poem. It's my sister."

I moved on and noticed that Rachel was filling her paper with hearts, flowers, and sentences that said, "I love you."

"Is this from a poem we read?" I asked her?

"Oh no, " Rachel replied. "I'm making this for you."

I tried to explain to the group what we were supposed to be doing. But, Rachel thought I didn't like her picture and she began crying.

I continued looking at my students' work and discovered that every single student was drawing whatever they felt like drawing. I suddenly realized that they had been drawing and painting whatever they liked the entire semester. They hadn't a clue that their art work should be connected to our literacy lessons. They

viewed art as 'free time'. I spoke to my professor about this dilemma and she said to make sure that my students always know why they are engaged in arts activities. I also recognized that I had contributed to my students considering art as 'free time' by saying in each lesson, "Hurry through your writing so we can get to art."

This reinforced my students' perceptions that our art work was divorced from our literacy activities. I also caused problems by always handing out art supplies prior to giving directions. By the time I gave directions, my students were already drawing and painting and they didn't listen to me. Further, I never engaged my students in productive discussions that would help them link our work in literacy with the arts (e.g., an exchange of ideas about their favorite Shel Silverstein poems).

Discussion

Explorations of our preservice teachers' cases illuminated 11 prevailing themes. Ten themes related to problematic issues confronting our preservice teachers as they worked to support their students' literacy learning through the arts. A single theme highlighted the successes and joys of our preservice teachers as they recognized the increased motivation and enthusiasm of disruptive or academically at-risk students when they became fully engaged in aesthetic activities.

Our research showed that across the two teaching contexts (i.e., Davis and Logan Schools), these 11 themes were uniformly distributed throughout all of the arts domains (i.e., writing, and the visual and performing arts). Therefore, in this

study, distinctions in school setting did not produce significant theme variations in our preservice teachers' cases (see Table for the number of cases in each of the theme categories for each school context).

One explanation for the stability of the themes across teaching contexts and arts domains is that the structure, course requirements, and focus of our two field initiatives are comparable. In addition, as supervisors, our expectations for our preservice teachers' achievements are similar and our teaching philosophies and instructional styles are parallel. Another consideration is that although Davis and Logan Schools are located in different states, their instructional policies are equivalent. For example, in both schools, few arts activities are offered, and students are expected to work quietly and individually. Group collaborations and interactive discussions are discouraged. Further, the majority of students in Davis and Logan Schools live in harsh neighborhood environments. Violence and poverty are common and students' life circumstances manifest themselves through their conversations, stories, behavior, and artistic expressions.

The stability of case themes also may relate to the neophyte status of our preservice teachers. In both schools a preponderance of preservice teachers wrote about group management issues. Research shows that a prevalent concern for beginning teachers is how to understand and guide unmotivated pupils and how to manage groups of students (Richards & Gipe, in press; Robeck & Wallace, 1990).

It is not surprising that a second dominant theme in our preservice teachers' cases centered around students' apprehensions about taking risks in creative activities. Art is basically excluded from the regular curricula in Davis and

Logan Schools and as a result, students have little knowledge about how to use visual arts materials, perform on the stage, compose songs, or write creatively in order to express their personal thoughts, understandings, and emotions. Students who perceive themselves as inadequately prepared in the arts would naturally feel reticent and cautious about engaging in artistic pursuits.

Implications for Teacher Education and Elementary School Curricula

The findings of our inquiry attest to the efficacy of case writing for preservice teachers. Concentrating on educational quandaries and pondering possible solutions to problems has the capacity to facilitate preservice teachers' professional growth. (L. Shulman, 1992). Further, the themes in preservice teachers' cases can serve as windows into their teaching experiences. For example, we learned what dilemmas confronted our preservice teachers as they supported their student' literacy learning through the arts. In addition, we now have narrative evidence that artistic pursuits can benefit disruptive or academically at-risk students.

The question then becomes, what do we, as literacy teacher educators, need to do to help our preservice teachers effectively integrate students' literacy learning with the arts? Careful attention to the the case issues that preservice teachers consider important certainly provides insights about our own competence in guiding preservice teachers' professional development. Through our case analysis, we noticed gaps in our course instruction. In particular, we learned that in our lectures, we need to stress the importance of modeling literacy-based arts

lessons, and that it is crucial for us to demonstrate these types of integrated lessons for our preservice teachers. We also must supply relevant readings and seminar discussions with appropriate guest speakers to help our preservice teachers understand and appreciate the linkage between their students' backgrounds, interests, and artistic expressions. Equally important, we need to increase our demonstration lessons for our preservice teachers to help them become more accomplished in managing groups of students, more proficient in connecting literacy lessons with relevant arts activities, and more responsive and able to empower students who are afraid to take risks in the arts. Further, we must consider the feasibility of adding arts-based workshop sessions or cross-disciplinary seminars to our course agendas that provide our preservice teachers with practical experiences working with various types of visual arts media, authoring fictional and information books, and participating in informal drama activities. Hands-on encounters with the arts has the potential to awaken preservice teachers' aesthetic perspectives and help them become more responsive to their students' artistic needs and interests.

The research also underscores the potential dangers of reducing or eliminating the arts in elementary education. Instead of "widening the learning circle" (Blecher & Jaffee, 1998, p. xi), we run the risk of disallowing many students full engagement in learning and the curriculum. As Cairney (1998), Eisner (1997), and Greene (1995), point out, there are many forms of literacy. In the twenty-first century literate students will not simply read and write (Cairney, 1998). Literate students will demonstrate confidence and competence in using all types of

media as essential forms of communication, including technology, print, and the visual and performing arts. Schools that deny students access to the arts will limit the ways in which students can access meaning, learn, think, and communicate.

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Table

Predominant Case Themes and Number of Cases in Each Category for Each School Context

Davis School - 97 Cases
Logan School - 106 Cases

Themes	Davis School	Logan School
	Number of Cases in Each Category	
preservice teachers overly teacher-directed	10	9
classroom teachers' apathy	2	1
books/fiction reflecting students' stressful environments	8	9
preservice teachers neglecting to model/scaffold arts lessons	9	10
students afraid to take risks in arts activities	15	14
positive behavior changes in disruptive/at-risk students	6	9
students' lack of familiarity with visual arts media	10	8
older students' art initiatives influenced by film and 'hip-hop' videos	4	6
students' lack of cooperation	9	13
preservice teachers' inadequate planning/management skills	21	23
preservice teachers offering arts activities unrelated to literacy lessons	3	4